

Good evening,

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, my name is Peter Diplock, and I am the Assistant Vice Provost for the Center for Excellence in Teaching and learning at the University of Connecticut. I have worked at UCONN for close to 10 years as a faculty member, academic program director, and administrator, and so have multiple vantage points from which to comment on the current context.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my comments with you this evening, and for all of the support that you have shown for the University of Connecticut over the years.

I think everyone appreciates the daunting task you have before you and the challenges you face in addressing budget deficits. That said, I would like to share my concern with the magnitude of the proposed cuts, and highlight briefly the reasons for my concern.

Some of you may be familiar with Jim Collins, a popular business author and his work from Good to Great! For me, this metaphor aptly captures the journey that UCONN embarked on beginning with UCONN 2000 and continuing through to Next Gen CT----none of which would have been possible without the vision, support, and recognition of this legislative body about the impact and Return on Investment that can accrue state wide as a result of this kind of commitment to higher education.

I am concerned that the recommend budget decrease of \$40 million dollars will dial back that progress. With your support I have seen the progress we are making in Genomics, in STEM education generally, in Digital Media, and in Human Rights education and other important areas. And in many areas at the University we can say with confidence we are, or are on the verge of going from great to truly excellent. I believe that our ability to sustain our greatness is threatened by such a large and precipitous budget cut. Said differently I think we run the risk of going backward from excellent to great, worse yet from great to good.

Excellence in teaching and learning does not occur in a vacuum. It requires an investment in faculty, staff, students and technology. In short it requires tremendous support. In my particular area, I am concerned that the inroads we have made in elevating learning outcomes, providing support in Writing and Math areas for students who come to us with uneven preparation, and the truly

innovative work that our faculty are doing teaching our students and engaging our students with hybrid and flipped and online strategies, are in jeopardy. I have seen first-hand the impact that our institutional strategy of attracting the best and brightest faculty has had on our students learning and to see a reversal of this good fortune would be most disappointing, to our students most of all. The Institute for Teaching and Learning works with 100's of faculty each year, working to share best practices of teaching and learning. Our direct student support in writing through our W center and math through our Q center see thousands of students each semester, and I worry that our ability to deliver the support necessary will be undermined with such a large budget cut.

One of the primary reasons I came to UCONN and have chosen to stay at UCONN is because of the dynamic investment that the state has been making. We have something very special at UCONN. We are special. And I'd like to think we can continue to be special. But we need the appropriate resources to do so, and that ultimately requires an alignment with your vision. So in closing my biggest concern is that with the budget cuts proposed we won't be special at all, we will be most ordinary. And I don't think ordinary is something we should aspire to.

I appreciate you listening to my concerns and wish you well as you grapple with what is a most challenging situation.

Sincerely,

Peter Diplock